

Accessing Health Care Services for California's Children in Foster Care Task Force

November 19, 2010

Dear Ms. Belshe,

The Task Force supports the County Mental Health Directors Association (CMHDA) and the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) Action Plan (July 29, 2010) provisions to improve screening and intake; increase communication among county child welfare, probation and mental health staff; create a robust case management system; create an effective accountability system; and increase mental health provider capacity, especially in rural counties. The Task Force also supports the National Center for Youth Law goals of assuring that all children placed out of county are assigned a county of responsibility and that children placed out of county have equal access to the services they need.

The Task Force believes that these proposals can be strengthened by:

- Allowing for individual reassignment of responsibility based on the needs of the child.
- Using Medi-Cal health managed care as a service model for mental health. Example: Unless assessed child should be treated by county of origin, the residency would determine the county of responsibility.
- Creating an evaluation plan describing the specific actions that will be taken to improve accountability including (1) the indicators the State will use to determine whether children placed out of county receive mental health services consistent with the treatment plan and when the services are provided, (2) the actions that will be taken if those indicators show that children are not receiving needed services.
- Providing specific recommendations to improve communication among county child welfare, probation and mental health staff and between counties. At a minimum, social services will notify mental health when considering placing a child out-of-county and county mental health will notify the mental health plan in the host county.

- Ensuring that the contracting and claiming process is simplified for providers regardless of the type of placement.
- Identifying short term and long term implementation objectives with timelines, and identifying actions that can be taken immediately. Clearly outlining next steps, including the individuals or entities responsible for each task and any specific changes to statute, regulation, or policy that are necessary. So the momentum is not lost, we recommend this recommendation be established at the CWC meeting on December 9th.
- Developing a specific action plan to resolve capacity problems, or at a minimum, identifying how such an action plan will be developed.

We thank you for all the time and effort you have given to assure that foster youth placed out-of-county will have equal access to needed mental health services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Brown".

Carol Brown, Chair
Foster Care Task Force